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ABSTRACT

Factors important to assessing community college enrollment trends and the future implications of these trends are discussed. Changes in college student characteristics included an increased percentage of women and part-time students, increased student age, and more vocational programs. Colleges must monitor their enrollments using existing college and community data. Enrollment projects must be a team effort of the institution, and cooperative efforts of colleges can be beneficial. "Contingency type" planning and the assessment of alternative actions on a regular basis are needed. Charts of population data for Johnson County, Kansas, are included, and necessary elements of an institutional data base are outlined. (SW)

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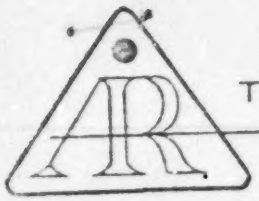

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES: ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND MARKETING PROCESSES--THEIR IMPACT ON STRATEGIC PLANNING

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT: Trends and Implications

Presented by:

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The Association for Institutional Research
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ENROLLMENT: Trends and Implications

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment at community colleges in 1985 will be 48 percent more than enrollment in 1975, while enrollment at four-year colleges will increase four percent during the same time (6).

Yet, there are some community colleges experiencing decline at the same time that other colleges are experiencing growth.

A few colleges have already succumbed to the pressures of declining enrollment. Those institutions that failed to survive the dilemma of declining enrollments generally fell prey to one or more of the following mistakes.

- *Failure to Recognize the Problem*. Enrollment forecasts for institutions in trouble were consistently high. Missed forecasts were explained away using a variety of reasons.

- *Ignoring the Problem*. Spending continued and changes were not made in programs or recruitment. An institution can experience enrollment decline and survive if the problem is recognized and not ignored. However, a college that continues to operate as though there is no problem is like a person with appendicitis who refuses to go to the doctor. Survival is unlikely.

- *Lack of Individual Responsibility*. Staff assumed that "all was well" or felt no responsibility to take action to inform other staff of an emerging problem. Instructors assumed that it is the administration's job; administration assumed that it is the admission's job; the "*BUCK*" continues to be passed.

- *Too Little Too Late*. The seriousness of the problem was either recognized too late or ignored too long. Once action is taken, it is often the type that creates a vicious circle. The dynamics of the situation are very much like that of quicksand--once an institution is entrapped, corrective efforts can add to the problem. For example, decreasing

> enrollment results in reduced revenues; declining income causes cutbacks in programs, staff recruitment and promotion; economy measures cause the institution to be less attractive to students, which in turn further reduces the enrollment.

How then does a college assess its own enrollment trends and assess what implications those trends have for the future? If that question had an easy answer, this topic would probably not have been on the program. There are some factors, though, that I do feel are important and perhaps my ideas may generate some interchange of other ideas.

During the 1960's when enrollment was increasing linearly, the main thrust was to keep up with growth. There was little time for imaginative program planning--just providing space was difficult. With the decline of enrollment at a number of colleges, however, there is a demand for accurate enrollment projections.

Unfortunately, this demand cannot be satisfied by one or even a few people at a college. During the 1960's most first year college students were the typical 18 year old and the population was readily identifiable. Now during the 1970's, however, first year college students are a variety of ages. The median student age at two-year colleges has been slowly increasing. The mean student age is usually even higher than the median student age. At our college during fall 1977, the median age was 22 years and the mean was 26 years. Many colleges have even higher median and mean ages.

The composition of the student body has been changing markedly in other ways such as percentage of women students and percentage of persons who enroll part-time for only one or two classes. At our college, the percentage of women has increased from 38 percent to 56 percent during the

last seven years. The percentage of part-time students has increased from 39 percent to 64 percent during the same seven years. More than 50 percent are enrolling in only one or two classes. According to the April 10 "Equal Opportunity in Higher Education," Garland Parker has reported that women now account "for 52 percent of the 3.4 million students at 1,006 two-year colleges... the percentage of women among part-time students was even higher, at 54 percent." In addition, "two-year colleges had a 6 percent increase in part-time students and a 2 percent decline in full-time students."

Many students are also enrolling for only one semester. A college may be surprised when it examines the enrollment data to find out what percentage of fall students returned for the spring semester. Perhaps, though, the needs of those fall students have been met. Maybe, they were seeking a job related class for on-the-job purposes or job advancement. Perhaps, they wanted to learn how to be a better homemaker or needed some personal enrichment. The variety of reasons for attending college also influences the ratio of graduates to a college's full-time equivalent enrollment. Colleges may find enrollment increasing, but the number of graduates either stabilizing or declining. Why have those dramatic changes occurred? It is impossible to identify the cause, but programs and services offered by a college have undoubtedly had their effect. The college which has responded to the needs of women, the needs of the handicapped, the needs of the unemployed, the needs of the high school graduate, the needs of men, the needs of those seeking job advancement, the needs of those seeking a career which requires an advanced degree... is meeting community needs. Such colleges are going to find it increasingly

difficult or even impossible to predict enrollment on a long-term basis. The reason is that enrollment is no longer related only to the number of 18 year olds. Rather enrollment will be increasingly related to the number of people within a larger age range such as 18 to 29. The April 10, 1978, "Chronicle of Higher Education" reported that more than one-third of college students are 25 or older. Nationally, enrollment of women ages 25 and older increased 23 percent from 1976 to 1977, according to the Bureau of the Census. At JCCC, the number of women, ages 25 and older, increased 24 percent during that same time.

I find myself concerned these days about a number of issues. The concerns are all related to changes in student characteristics. Specifically, the percentages of women and part-time students are increasing, the median age is increasing, and so is the percentage of vocational programs.

- *Increased Percentage of Women*. There are two concerns. One is whether the needs of men are being met. There are some reasons why there has been an increase of women, but the question now needs to be asked--are the programming needs being met for men? Secondly, are colleges providing the special services women need to complete their educational plans and to implement any career goals or are women going to become disillusioned with a college education?

- *Increased Percentage of Part-Time Students*. Will colleges be content to serve their current number of students citing the large percentage of part-time enrollments as indicating they are meeting needs. Will colleges continue to rely on FTE as the primary indicator to measure effectiveness and needs for services? For example, will colleges increase their expenditures for library acquisitions and counseling services on the basis of full-time equivalent enrollment or have they recognized that each student, regardless of number of credit hours carried, requires some basic services.

- *Increased Students Age*. Will the recent high school graduate be increasingly overlooked in the rush to attract more "non-traditional" students. Already an 18 year old finds it difficult to find a job. Will colleges in their eagerness for survival either ignore 18 year olds or make it difficult for them to enter the college educational programs of their choice.

- *More Vocational Programs*. Are students today being educated for change? Are colleges changing their programs and schedules to meet the increasing number of vocational people who will need retraining either in their current field or for new jobs that don't yet exist? Lahti (4) has indicated that by 1987, "one in three workers will be employed at jobs that do not exist today." One related problem is that many vocational jobs do not operate on a standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. time frame. College scheduling has yet to allow much flexibility for persons employed on variable shifts.

What can one do to maintain or increase enrollment and also project enrollment accurately. First, colleges must monitor their enrollment using existing college *and* community data so that changes in trends can be assessed. Do not ignore the data and perpetuate wishful thinking. One college in its Master Plan cited the declining high school enrollment in its district and then promptly ignored the data item in its projections of continued enrollment increases.

Secondly, enrollment projections must be a team effort. Enrollment projections require knowledge of the demographics influencing a college's enrollment, but there must also be more emphasis on assessing community needs and the development of promotional, delivery and evaluation techniques. Actions by college staff can influence whether trends result in enrollments declining, stabilizing or increasing. Retention factors must also not be overlooked. Leach (5) has reported the successful efforts of Prince George's Community College. At Johnson County Community College, our enrollment increase from 1976 to 1977 was largely in the areas where new programs had been developed to meet community needs.

The response by a college in meeting community needs will make an impact. Certainly a college which is located in an area with a declining overall population is likely to experience an enrollment decline. But, colleges must be careful *not* to over-react to a declining 18 year old population. A college which over-reacts by ignoring the 18 year old and only concentrating on older populations is "biting the hand that feeds it." Prophecies can become self-fulfilling. The college that begins to think enrollment declines indicate disaster around the corner can go out of business. Perhaps a stable, even lower enrollment may give time to assess the quality and type of existing programs and services.

You may feel that I am avoiding the issues and don't know how to do enrollment projections. Quite the contrary. About six years ago, our College began a cooperative population and enrollment project with the largest school district in the county (more than 42,000 students). Four other school districts participated in a more detailed study a year later. Based on 1973 compiled data, enrollment increases were projected for four school districts and declines were projected for the remaining two districts. Those projections have been amazingly accurate. Frankly, it was somewhat unnerving to make such contrasting projections within the same county. Public school districts do not have the opportunity to serve more than a fixed age population. Therefore, accurate long-range enrollment projections are possible.

The impact of that original study on the county has been dramatic. There have been seven successful school bonds in the county. One school district has had two major building programs and is in need of more space.

The data have been so in demand that we print and sell a booklet "Population Growth Patterns for Johnson County, Kansas." An attempt is made to update the booklet yearly. Some sample graphs and data are shown on pages 11 to 17.

In 1969, Favreau under the auspices of AACJC mentioned some ideas to help the development of a Fire Science program. They are applicable in general to all college programs.

- Hold professional meetings on campus and encourage college staff to attend those meetings.
- Community relations and promotion are important.
- Encourage staff membership in or appearance on programs of civic organizations.

College enrollments are going to become increasingly difficult to forecast. Changes in student body composition can be caused by changes in programs and services. Therefore, institutional research staff must work closely with those persons responsible for student recruitment and changes in curriculum, delivery systems and college services. The data can be used to monitor the effectiveness of changes as well as to indicate trend changes. Those responsible for implementing change must examine the data in two ways. One, areas can be identified where changes could be made in curriculum or services. Secondly, potential problems can be identified if no changes are made. Thus, the era of the 1970's and 1980's must be that of cooperation among college staff and between college staff and the community it serves.

Finally, cooperation between colleges is important. Colleges need to "lead with their strengths" and different colleges will undoubtedly

have different strengths. Cooperating with other schools and encouraging their strengths should be mutually beneficial.

Perhaps the philosophy of William Norris, Chairman of Control Data, can be applied to education (7). Instead of talking about unemployment in the ghettos of Minneapolis, St. Paul and Washington, Control Data "is taking long risks to create jobs for people who had felt left behind and shut out of the system."

According to Norris "too many big businessmen are just sitting on their butts." Maybe educators need to get off their butts and take some long risks to provide quality education for individuals with a variety of needs. Those risks, however, must be coupled with an on-going monitoring of pertinent data and a willingness to change direction when the data indicate a need for change. Each college must monitor its own data plus community data which could influence enrollment. Planning needs to be "contingency type" planning and the possible effects of alternative actions need to be assessed on a regular basis.

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1. Chronicle of Higher Education, April 10, 1978.

2. Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (Bi-Weekly Newspaper). Education News Service, Division of Capitol Publication, Washington, D.C., April 10, 1978.

3. Favreau, Donald F. Guidelines for Fire Service Education Programs in Community and Junior Colleges. American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Washington, D.C., 1969.

4. Lahti, Robert E. New Markets for Community Colleges. Community and Junior College Journal, Vol. 48, No. 4, December/January 1977-78, p. 8-11.

5. Leach, Ernest R. Implementing the Marketing Process. Community and Junior College Journal, Vol. 48, No. 4, December/January 1977-78, p. 20-24.

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7. Planting in the Ghettos. Time, April 3, 1978.

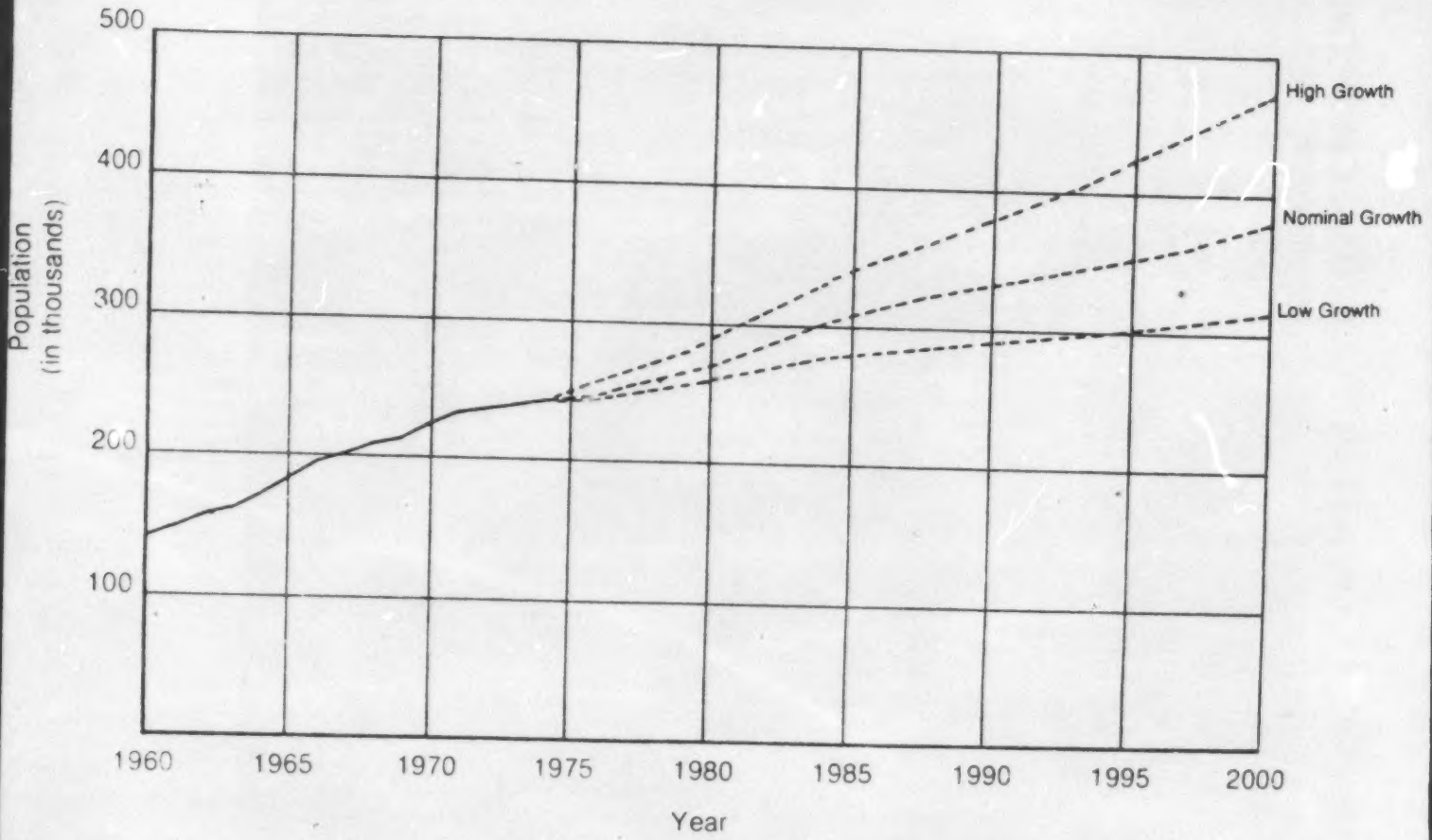
APPENDIX

JCCC STAFF

At Johnson County Community College, we have a staff of a director, two researchers and a secretary. I serve as director. One member of our staff serves as a Data Specialist. Responsibilities of the position are primarily related to the development and maintenance of the College data base, and coordinating the completion of all state and federal reports together with all incoming questionnaires from external agencies. The data base is a critical factor for any instituion. A second member of our staff serves as a Research Evaluation Specialist. That individual is responsible for the design and coordination of all student follow-ups; provides staff with expertise in problem identification, data analysis, synthesis and documentation; and handles specific research projects from the initial planning stage through the writing of the final report. Our secretary has been trained by us to perform some of the duties of a research assistant as well as a secretary. As a result, our secretary assists us by doing such things as telephone interviewing, coding survey data for keypunching, and preparing data summaries from computer printouts in addition to secretarial duties like typing all our reports.

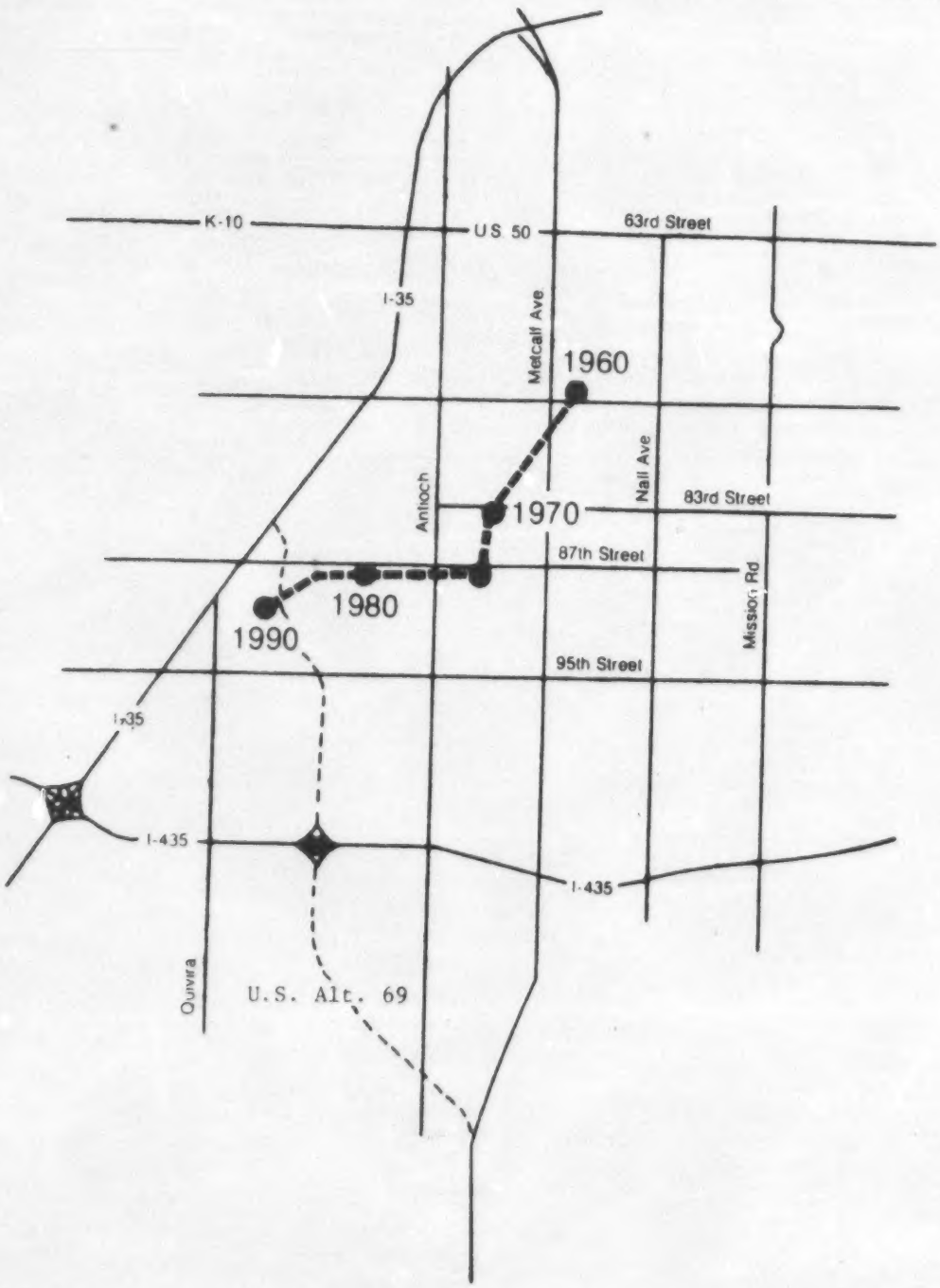
Currently, we also have two students working in our office. Both are employed through the work/study program and they provide assistance in survey administration, coding, keypunching, typing, data compilation and a variety of other miscellaneous duties.

# JOHNSON COUNTY POPULATION
## 1960 - 2000




A continued, but slowing rate of population growth is projected for Johnson County in the decades ahead. The County went from 141,694 residents in 1960 to 250,951 in 1977, an increase of 77 percent. In contrast, Johnson County will increase an additional 23 percent by the year 2000 if the birth rate continues to decline and net migration into the county continues at the 1973-1974 level. If, on the other hand, the birth rate does not continue to decline, the County population will increase 50 percent over the next 23 years.

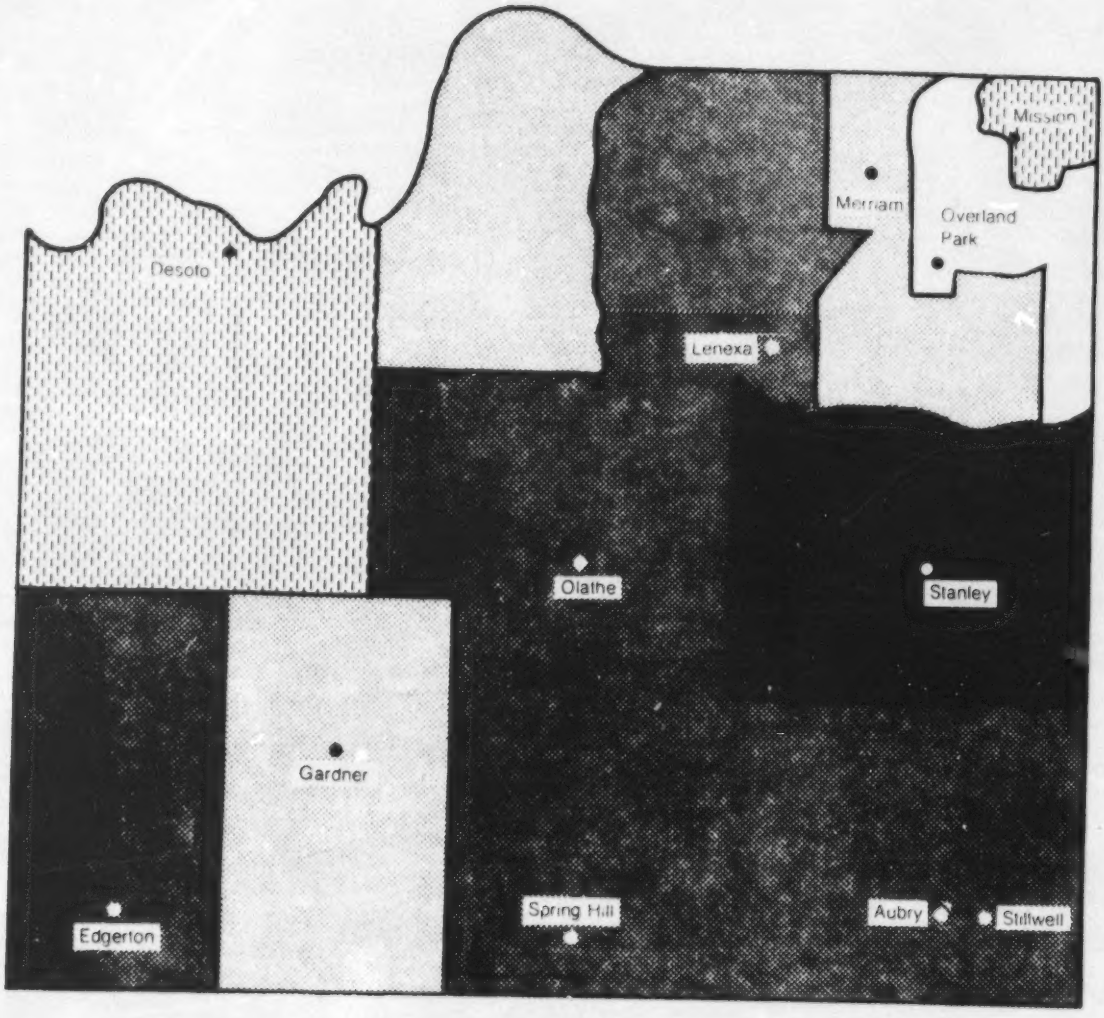
# JOHNSON COUNTY POPULATION CENTROID




The center of population in Johnson County is moving south and west toward the communities of Olathe and Lenexa, according to the latest demographic study by Johnson County Community College. Located near 75th and Metcalf in 1960, the population center is expected to shift to 91st and Nieman Road by 1990.

# POPULATION
# TEN YEAR FORECAST

Percent Increase Over 1973

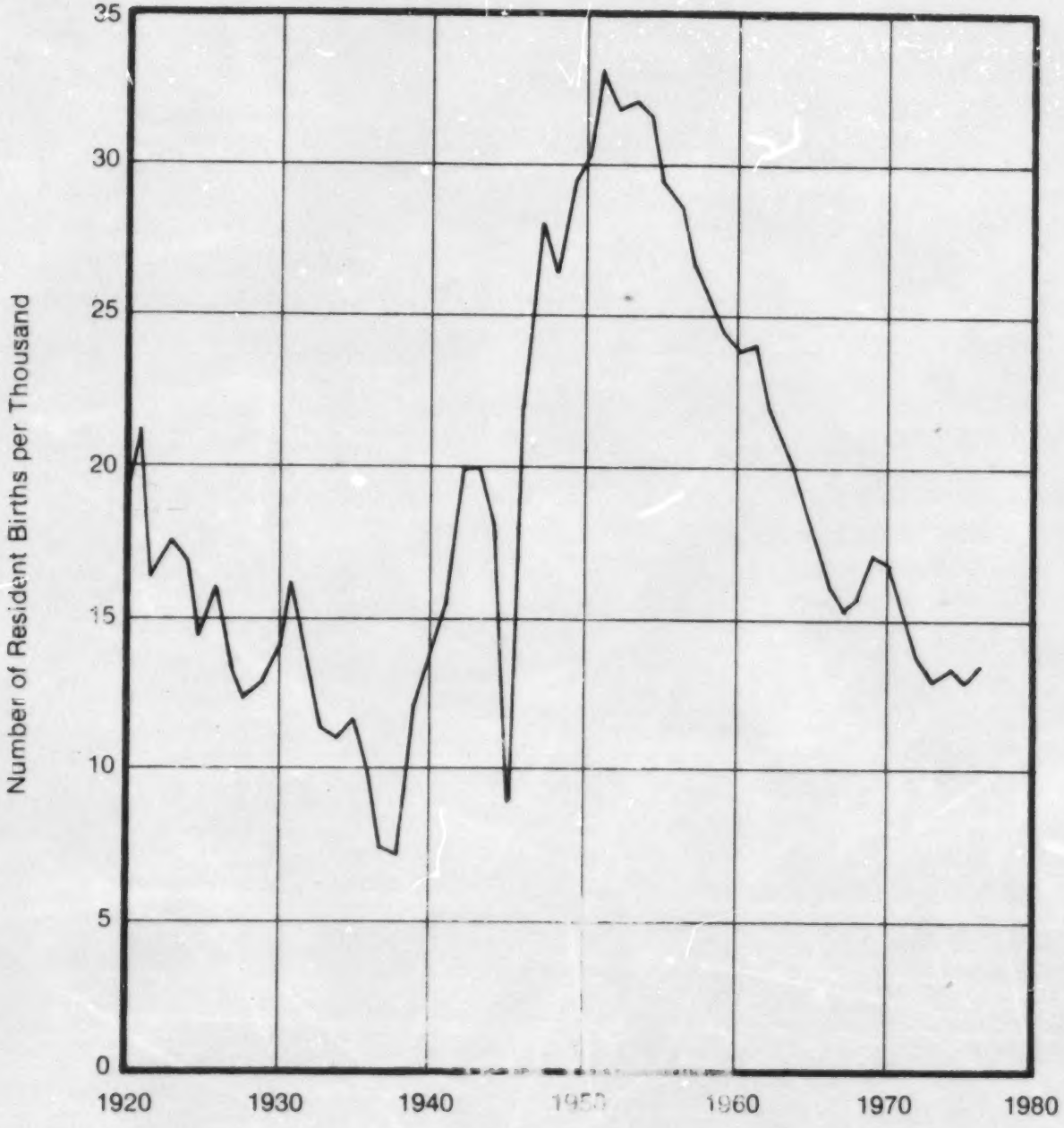



Percent Increase

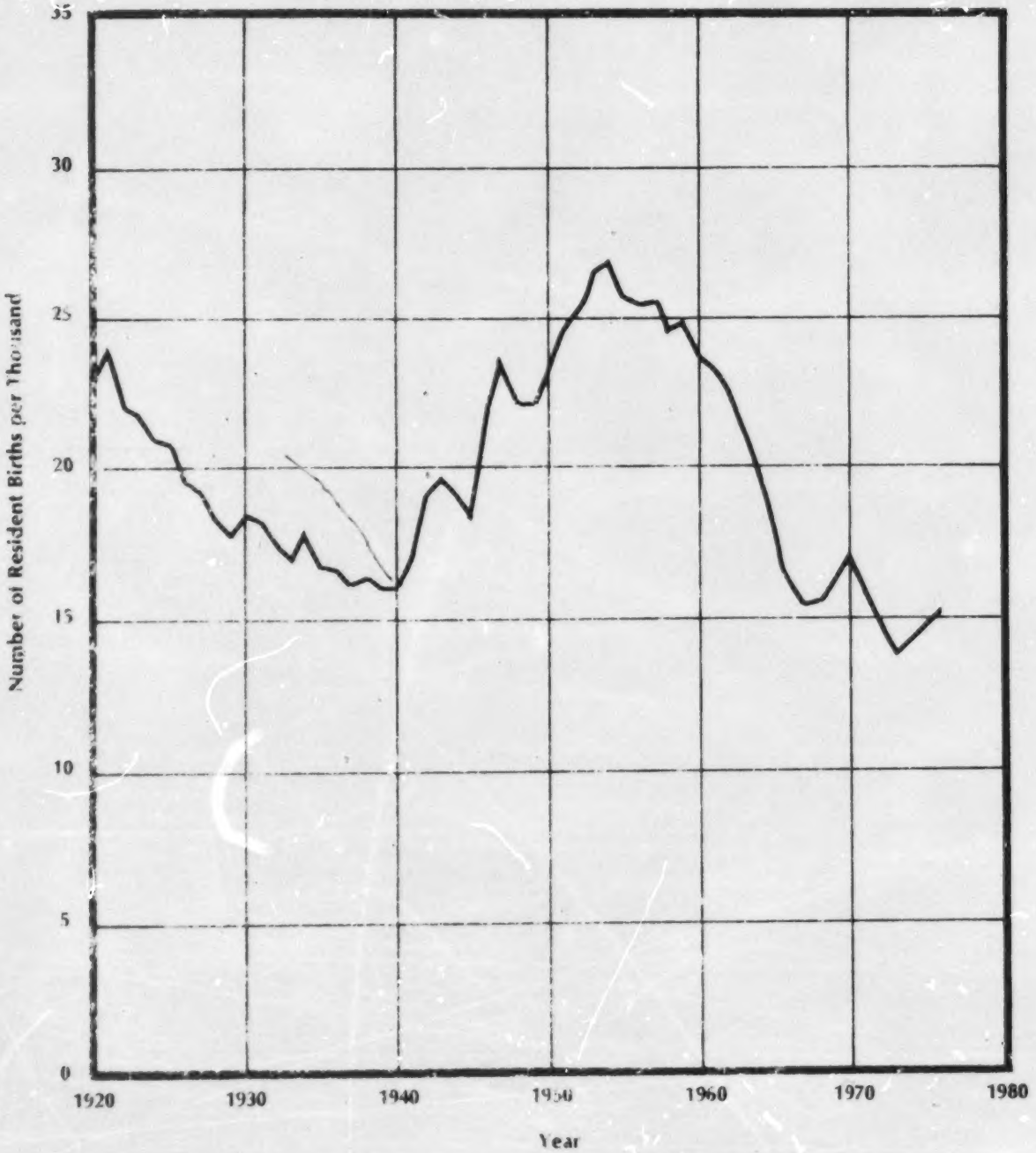
- 0 - Declining
- 0 - 10% Growth
- 10 - 50% Growth
- 50 - 100% Growth
- 100% or more Growth

**The demographic study completed by Johnson County Community College projects population for various areas of the County through 1983. Those areas located in the heavily shaded areas of the map are expected to have the largest population increases.**

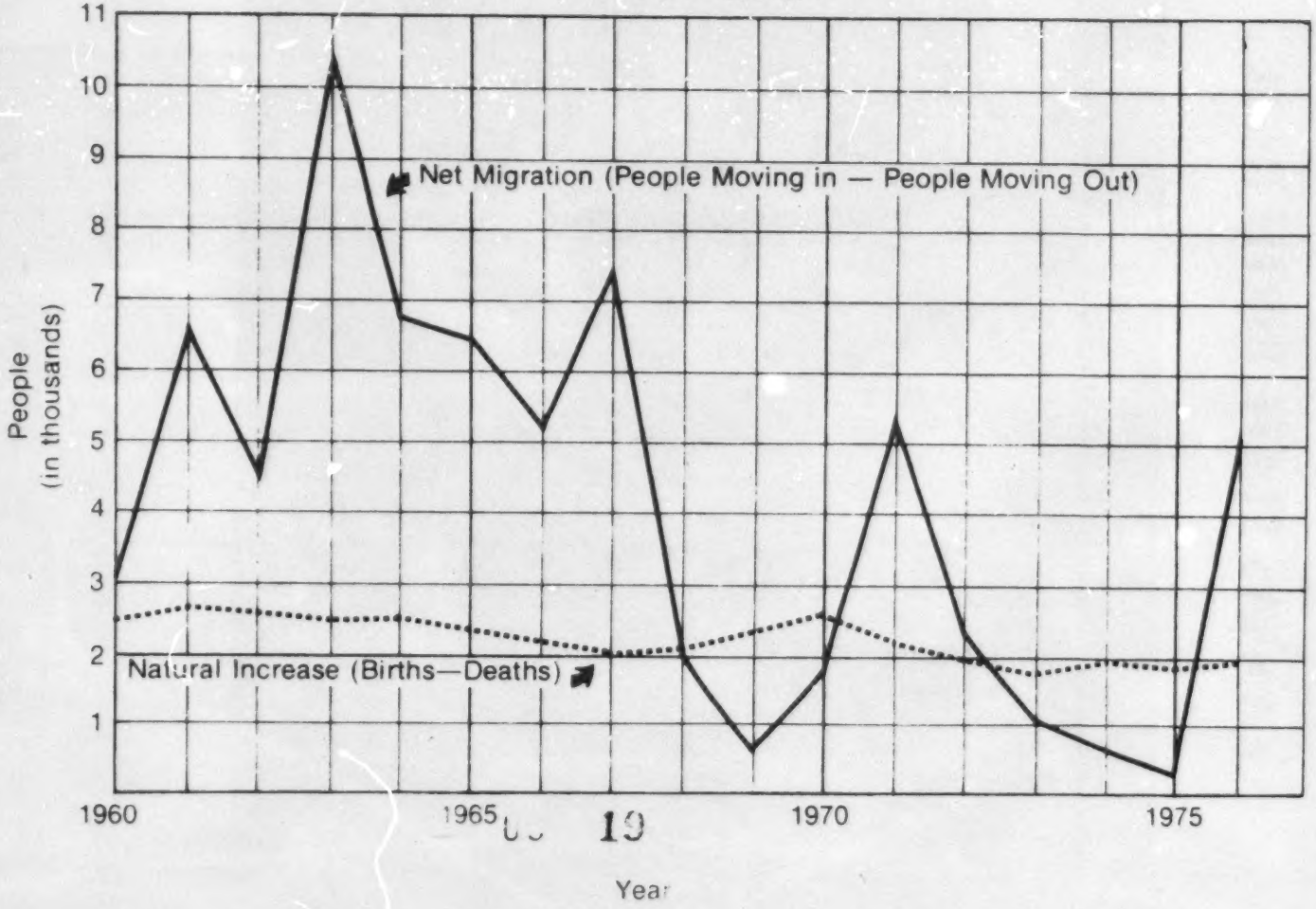
## JOHNSON COUNTY BIRTH RATE



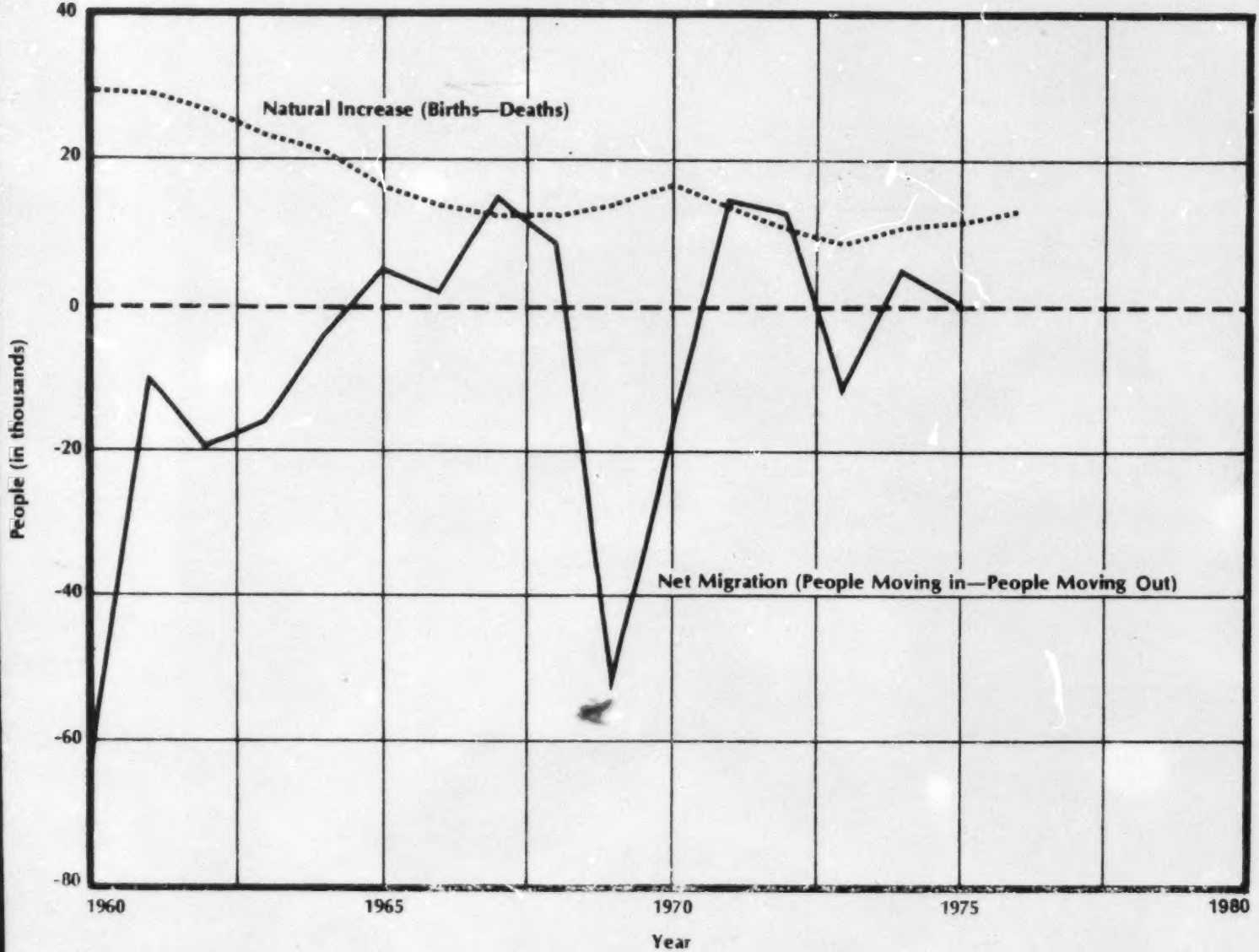
# KANSAS STATE BIRTH RATE



# COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH FOR JOHNSON COUNTY 1960 - 1976



# COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH FOR KANSAS STATE 1960—1976



## THE DATA BASE

A data base is critical for any institution. The reason is that educational institutions exist to serve "students" (credit hour and non-credit hour students plus members of the community served by the college) and educational services are the "product" of the institution. No successful business would attempt to sell a product to a customer without 1) knowing something about the consumer to whom they were going to try sell their product and 2) a complete understanding of what their product could do for the benefit of the consumer. Those educational institutions that flourish will be continually seeking answers to the following questions concerning their students who they exist to serve:

- Who are the current students?
- Who could be students but are not?
- Who will be the future students?
- Who should be the future students?

An institution should also be asking the following questions concerning their product - educational services:

- What are the current educational services and how successful are they?
- What changes would be needed to meet the needs of those who could be served, but currently are not?
- What educational services will be needed for future students?

These questions are not all easy to answer. Each one of them requires data. Without accurate data, any attempt to answer the questions will be a waste of time and energy. The detailed data may be located in a variety of sources - some on campus and some off campus. However, it is important that an individual be responsible for the accuracy and continuity of the data as they are developed on campus. The basic data should be available in one location to make access easier and also to maintain

consistency in reporting data. Consistency is vital so that meaningful comparisons can be made from year to year and to help prevent erroneous data comparisons that could result in erroneous conclusions.

Incorporated into the data base should be the following:

1. Relevant historic and current facts together with projections concerning:
   a. the college and students (e.g., enrollment for fall, spring and summer according to headcount, full-time equivalent, full-time versus part-time students, male/female ratio, age distribution, geographic origin of students; organization and staffing of the college together with the educational background and expertise of instructional and administrative staff; and fiscal resources - amounts and source).
   b. the community being served by the college and/or the community which should be served by the college (e.g., population by age distribution, social and economic characteristics, manpower needs). State and national census data are sources which should not be overlooked.
2. Results of research studies which indicate:
   a. how successful the college has been in meeting student needs
   b. how successful the college has been in meeting community needs
   c. what will be the future community and student needs.

A sample of some basic enrollment data is presented on page 20, while a sample of some population data about the community is given on page 21. The changes occurring over a five or six year period are facts of which an educational institution should be aware so that they can "act" rather than "react."

BASIC ENROLLMENT DATA

| | Fall 1970 | Fall 1971 | Fall 1972 | Fall 1973 | Fall 1974 | Fall 1975 | Fall 1976 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Full-time equivalent enrollment | 1732 | 2131 | 2364 | 2643 | 2785 | 3176 | 2924 |
| Total number of students | 2335 | 3150 | 3611 | 4107 | 4479 | 5253 | 4954 |
| Percent of "full-time" students* | 61% | 53% | 48% | 46% | 43% | 41% | 38% |
| Percent of "part-time" students | 39% | 47% | 52% | 54% | 57% | 59% | 62% |
| Percent male | 62% | 58% | 56% | 55% | 51% | 50% | 46% |
| Percent female | 38% | 42% | 44% | 45% | 49% | 50% | 54% |
| Percent with outside employment | 72% | 61% | 67% | 72% | 72% | 72% | 72% |
| Percent veterans | 10% | 11% | 11% | 13% | 13% | 15% | 11% |
| Percent out-of-district students | 1.8% | 2.1% | 3.1% | 3.4% | 3.2% | 4.8% | 6.1% |
| Percent out-of-state students | 1.0% | 1.0% | 2.5% | 3.4% | 1.3% | 2.3% | 3.5 |
| Percent foreign students | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.3% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.4% |

*A "full-time" student carries a load of 12 credit hours or more. However, one full-time equivalent (FTE) student load is 15 credit hours.

Note.--All percentages are with respect to total student headcount.

## SAMPLE COUNTY POPULATION DATA

Note the changes from 1970-77 in the age groups 6-12, 19-29 and 66-74. These can influence future enrollment patterns and curriculum needs.

| Age Group | Federal Census 1970 | County Census 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 - 3 | 15113 | 15553 | 14684 | 13997 | 13224 | 12799 | 12951 |
| 4 | 4212 | 3909 | 3888 | 4245 | 4240 | 3862 | 3596 |
| 5 | 4476 | 4062 | 3941 | 3936 | 4250 | 4443 | 4048 |
| 6 - 12 | 35159 | 34683 | 33476 | 32024 | 30853 | 30369 | 30599 |
| 13- 17 | 23593 | 24536 | 24891 | 25075 | 25301 | 25201 | 25320 |
| 18 | 3298 | 4433 | 4695 | 4599 | 4697 | 5034 | 4834 |
| 19- 29 | 32801 | 40387 | 42298 | 43690 | 45753 | 47832 | 50169 |
| 30- 44 | 43809 | 44036 | 44703 | 45696 | 46663 | 47922 | 51572 |
| 45- 61 | 38299 | 38782 | 39878 | 40529 | 41246 | 42147 | 43932 |
| 62 | 1382 | 1224 | 1426 | 1401 | 1497 | 1628 | 1658 |
| 63- 64 | 2765 | 2490 | 2464 | 2529 | 2727 | 2812 | 3083 |
| 65 | 920 | 1118 | 1138 | 1206 | 1118 | 1352 | 1366 |
| 66- 74 | 7143 | 7036 | 7410 | 8188 | 8441 | 8427 | 9065 |
| 75+ | 4692 | 4642 | 4974 | 5220 | 4861 | 6408 | 6413 |
| Over 21/18* | -- | 5052 | 6348 | 6890 | 6910 | 3717 | 2345 |
| Total | 217662** (220073) | 231943 | 236214 | 239225 | 241781 | 243953 | 250951 |
| Births | 3711 | | 3104 | 3148 | 3154 | 3300 | |
| Deaths | 1100 | | 1264 | 1237 | 2164 | 1360 | |
| Net Migration | 1706 | | 1171 | 645 | 282 | 5058 | |
| Median Age | 27 | | 27 | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| % of People over 65+ | 6% | | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% |

By the year 2000, the median age will be 36 and 11 percent of the population will be over 65.

*These individuals did not give their exact age. From 1972-1976, the category was "Over 21." In 1977, data were for those "Over 18."

**The county total did not agree with the federal census total. However, the county did not provide age distribution.